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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT KIRKUK: KDP MAYOR RESIGNS, UN-RESIGNS, ATTACKS
OWN PARTY

Classified By: Kirkuk PRT Team Leader Howard Keegan for reason 1.4 (b)
and(d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Following a mass-casualty VBIED attack in Kirkuk city, its KDP mayor resigned, even though he had little authority over security. He later withdrew his resignation and remains a KDP member, but harshly criticized the KDP's local leadership and plans to start a competing political movement. His remarks reflect widespread dislike for the KDP among the "original people of Kirkuk." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) One day after the July 16 multiple-VBIED attack in Kirkuk that killed more than 80 and wounded more than 180, Kirkuk city Mayor Ihsan Majid Gilly (Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP), resigned, complaining of "chaos" in the city and the impossibility of protecting it. To PRT officers, Ihsan complained that he had had been rendered powerless because the mayor's position and powers are poorly defined and said that he had had several differences of opinion with the Governor over his authority. He recognized that he was not directly responsible for the city's security, but was frustrated with his inability to do anything about it, and felt strongly that, as a government official, he must resign if he could not meet the people's expectations.

¶3. (C) The senior KDP member in the Kirkuk Provincial Council (PC) told PRT officers that the KDP had not opposed the resignation and had asked the Governor to accept it. He added that the KDP planned to retain the mayor's post, but had not yet decided on a candidate.

A MAYOR WITHOUT AUTHORITY

¶4. (SBU) After the collapse of a late 2005 power-sharing deal among Kirkuk's PC blocs to divide top-level Provincial positions (which also led to the current boycott of PC meetings by most of its Arab and Turkman members), the Governor and PC appointed Ihsan to the mayor's position. However, he spent most of his tenure in Sweden, where his wife and children reside, returning to Kirkuk in early 2007. His absence went generally unnoticed: The Provincial government oversees police and municipal services in Kirkuk city, and the city lacks a municipal council because its selection is one of the issues bound up in the ongoing Arab-Turkman PC boycott.

¶5. (C) Since returning, Ihsan has occupied a symbolic position without real power. His attempts to assert his authority (e.g., in leading a crackdown on illegal building) were unsuccessful and mocked even by fellow KDP members. Ihsan conceded to PRT officers that he was "not a good administrator" but "a friend to the people," willing to listen to any group. He is well-regarded by Kirkuk's Arab, Turkman, and Chaldo-Assyrian communities, who respect his

family,s prominence and his personal moderation.

KURDISH PARTIES AT FAULT

¶6. (C) Ihsan told the PRT that the "original people of Kirkuk," including many Kurds, are extremely dissatisfied with the management of Kirkuk and blame the KDP and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which have dominated Kirkuk,s politics and administration since 2003. Saying that Kirkuk's ethnic communities were used to living together without problems, he thought that the "dictatorial" style of the Kurdish parties was driving the communities apart and that no solution to Kirkuk,s problems, including security, could be achieved without harmony between them. He said that he had tried to develop this harmony during his tenure as mayor, when members of all of Kirkuk,s communities were frequent visitors to his office; however, his fellow KDP members had criticized him for "running a cafe" and told him to "turn them out." He added that representatives from Kirkuk's Arab, Turkman, and Chaldo-Assyrian communities had asked him not to resign.

A SURPRISE ENDING

¶7. (C) By July 29, the Governor still had not accepted Ihsan's resignation, and Ihsan technically remained mayor. Ihsan told the PRT that KDP President Masood Barzani's personal representative Qadir Aziz had asked him not to resign, and Ihsan asked the PRT's opinion. After confirming Ihsan's willingness to yield his position if necessary to

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solve the Arab-Turkman PC boycott, the PRT urged him to keep it for the present to prevent the KDP from replacing him with a hard-liner. On August 6, Ihsan confirmed that he would not resign. He offered his help to organize a new movement of "the original people of Kirkuk" to compete with the existing political parties and sought PRT advice and support for his efforts.

¶8. (C) At the same time, Ihsan backed away from his previous blanket condemnation of the Kurdish parties, but stepped up his criticism of the local KDP. According to Ihsan, Masood sincerely wants the best for Kirkuk; however, there are "others" between Masood and Kirkuk who mislead him about the situation here. Ihsan specifically criticized the local KDP leadership as "outsiders" with "small minds" who run the local KDP organization "like an intelligence apparatus."

COMMENT: KDP PROBLEMS IN KIRKUK

¶9. (C) As the highest-ranking Provincial government member in the KDP, the KDP would not have permitted Ihsan to resign without permission, and his remarks to the PRT clearly indicate a falling-out with the local KDP organization. Ihsan comes from the prominent and well-respected Gilly tribe of Kirkuk. His extended family is allied with the KDP, and its eldest brother, Latif, is KDP Chief Masood Barzani's personal representative in Kirkuk. (Cousin Tanya Gilly, however, is a PUK member of Iraq's Council of Representatives.) However, the Gillys are much more moderate than the local KDP leadership and have a bad relationship with Kirkuk KDP Center Chief Najat Hassan, a hard-line Masood loyalist. When Ihsan offered his resignation, Najat, seeing an opportunity to replace Ihsan with someone more loyal, would not have opposed it.

¶10. (C) Given his position, Ihsan's blunt criticism of the local KDP leadership and desire to start a competing political movement suggest that the KDP's problems in Kirkuk

are more than an internal feud. Kirkuk is traditionally PUK turf, and, despite aggressive efforts, the KDP still lags in supporters and influence. The KDP has tried to gain "market share" by a variety of methods, including topping up the salaries of government employees, putting unemployed supporters on the KRG payroll as half-pay "ghost employees," and paying for good-works infrastructure projects. Still, Ihsan's feelings about the local KDP leadership are widely shared among the "original people of Kirkuk" (as they call themselves, with disdain for recent arrivals). While frustrated with both Kurdish parties, they particularly dislike the KDP (and its ruling Barzani family) for what they see as its tribal structure and ideological rigidity.

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